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SUBJECT: DELTA SUSPENDS ISTANBUL-NEW YORK FLIGHTS, OTHER
FLIGHTS TO U.S. PLENTIFUL

REF: ANKARA 1203

1. (SBU) Delta Airlines, which prior to the start of the Iraq operation ran four flights per week from Istanbul to New York, will suspended its Istanbul-New York flights for one month, from April 6 to May 2. Delta's Istanbul Station Manager, Giray Salgirtay, told econoff the suspension was an economic decision in response to low passenger loads since the start of the war. For example, he said, the March 31 Istanbul-New York flight had only 80 passengers, with 110 empty seats. Salgirtay said Delta Headquarters would reassess the situation on April 23 to determine whether or not to resume flights in May.

2. (SBU) Turkish Airlines (THY), on the other hand, has not yet cut any of its direct Istanbul-U.S. flights, which include flights 7 days per week to New York and 3 days per week to Chicago. THY is, however, considering cutting the Istanbul-New York route to 4 days per week, based on decreased passenger loads since the start of the war.

3. (SBU) Meanwhile, indirect flights from Turkey to the U.S. through Europe remain frequent and plentiful. From Ankara, THY flies directly to Munich, Berlin, Koln, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, and Vienna throughout the week. From Istanbul, THY, Lufthansa, British Airways, Air France, Cross Air, and Iberian Airlines fly to Munich, Frankfurt, London, Paris, Madrid, Barcelona, Brussels, Vienna, and Zurich almost daily (in some cases twice daily). There is wide seat availability on most of these flights. Lufthansa is reportedly planning to cut its twice-daily Istanbul-Frankfurt flight to once-daily, and British Airways may also cut some twice daily flights to once per day, in response to decreased passenger loads.

PEARSON